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ABSTRACT

Forty-four teachers (K-12) participated in a 6-hour university training course on teaching gifted students. Data were collected via questionnaires administered before, during, and at the conclusion of the course. The major problems perceived in the initial rating were planning, identification, and time. Before, midway through, and after training, teachers were asked to rate 21 competencies according to their needs as teachers of the gifted in four domains: (1) implementation practices of the gifted program, (2) assessment and curriculum delivery, (3) behavior management strategies, and (4) evaluation strategies. Competencies which decreased 50% or more from the first rating to the final rating included skills in implementing students' educational programs in the classroom, adapting materials to meet academic needs, and designing evaluation instruments geared toward academic programing. It is concluded that by allowing direct teacher input regarding their perceived needs, the relevance of the training appeared to provide decreases in the problem areas the teachers described. (CL)

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ADDRESSING THE PERCEIVED NEEDS OF REGULAR CLASSROOM TEACHERS IN TEACHING THE GIFTED STUDENT

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ADDRESSING THE PERCEIVED NEEDS OF REGULAR CLASSROOM TEACHERS IN TEACHING THE GIFTED STUDENT

In recent years increased numbers of gifted students have been identified, labeled and educated in regular classrooms. With the added emphasis on excellence across the nation, educators have become intensely aware of the need to educate each child optimally. Due to meager funding both nationally and in most states, these identified gifted students are primarily taught in regular classrooms. Regular classroom teachers who had little or no background in teaching gifted students found themselves responsible for the education of gifted students, and in many instances without adequate support at the building and/or district level. These circumstances have challenged these teachers to modify their instructional processes and to attempt to meet the needs of the gifted.

The challenge for teacher educators, gifted educators and school administrators is designing staff development programs that meet the expressed needs of regular education teachers and assist them in ultimately developing skills to more effectively cope with a wider range of student abilities (Dawson, 1978).

Such staff development programs should be focused on the explicit needs of their participants (Joyce, 1978). The study reported herein was designed to elicit those data, address those needs via six hours of university coursework, and to determine the needs unmet by the one semester coursework.

Data were collected through a series of three questionnaires; one, before the course began, midway the course, and at the end of the course. In all, 44 teachers responded to the questionnaires

in the fall of 1984. Ten (10) were primary teachers, grades K-3, six (6) were intermediate teachers, grades 4-5, eighteen (18) were middle school teachers, grades 6-8, and eight (8) were high school teachers, grades 9-12.

The participants were first asked to respond to a two-part questionnaire from which the competencies for the six hour coursework were designed. Table I depicts the responses of the participants as they perceived their greatest need or problem in teaching the gifted in the regular classroom. Each teacher was asked to rate the following areas as each area related to their problems in teaching the gifted with a rating of (1) depicting their greatest problem in each of these four areas: Planning, teaching knowledge, teaching resources and support resources. Therefore, the rating was 1 to 4.

The teachers were given the opportunity to make comments after completing the ratings. Class discussion ensued which allowed for expanded comments. Such comments are summarized under each of the problem areas rated in Table I.

TABLE I

Problems Encountered by Regular Teachers in Teaching Gifted Students in the Regular Classroom.

1st	2nd
Planning	Teaching Knowledge
.too little time	.lack of adequate training
.too many levels of instruction	.lack of understanding of creativity
	.behavior management

3rd	4th
Teaching Resources	Support Resources
.lack of materials for extension of learning	.lack of specific knowledge of state and local guidelines
	.identification process

The major problems perceived by teachers as identified in this initial rating are summarized in Table I with explanatory or descriptive comments shown below each of the problem areas. The planning process to include appropriate and challenging activities and learning experiences for gifted children was the major problem. Both elementary and secondary teachers were overwhelmed by the multiple instructional levels represented in part by the regular students but frustrated by the added multiple levels within the fewer gifted students within their classroom. In elementary schools, teachers traditionally had organized their classes around three to four reading groups with independent seatwork for those not directly engaged with the teacher. The need for challenging activities for the extension of learning required much greater amounts of planning time for the fewer number of gifted students. In the secondary classrooms, the traditional lecture and simple paper-pencil tasks were ineffective. Thus, requiring the teacher to utilize unusual amounts of time in planning for multiple activities of inquiry. Both elementary and secondary teachers expressed feelings of unpreparedness and guilt in the lack of time and skills in designing instruction for both the regular and gifted students. The teachers reported that as the gifted students completed activities often more quickly than the teacher anticipated, the teacher's attention was diverted, and both the academic and classroom management processes were adversely affected.

The identification process, including the many and varied degrees of giftedness seemed to be both complex and confusing to the teachers. The lack of information seemed to lead to assumed

misinformation which created frustrations relative to the total identification process. The attention required by regular teachers for revised modes of instruction and the creation and gathering of materials to provide maximal instruction for multiple levels of learners placed severe constraints on the teacher's on-task time during the school day. These same activities tended to increase their planning time beyond the school hours. Time-management, however, appeared to be a result rather than a cause of the teacher's problems. Yet, time remained their perceived most critical concern.

Because the first question of the study was critical to further efforts, teachers were asked to respond to a formal survey relative to four major areas of inquiry: 1) implementation practices of a gifted program; 2) assessment and curriculum delivery; 3) behavior management strategies; and 4) evaluation strategies.

Participants rated each of the competency statements in each of the four areas on a 3-point scale, with (1) as most important, (2) as important, and (3) as not as important.

TABLE 2: PERCEIVED NEEDS OF CLASSROOM TEACHERS WITH RESPECT TO GIFTED STUDENTS

N = 45

Perceived Need	Percent Rating of Responses		
	Most Important	Important	Not As Important
	1st	1st	1st
I. Implementation Practices of the Gifted Program			
1. Knowledge of state guidelines.	54%	37%	8%
2. Knowledge about how to get specialized services to gifted students in my classroom.	67%	33%	0%
3. Knowledge about the identification process in AISD.	42%	42%	16%
4. Knowledge about the students' educational program.	51%	40%	8%
5. Skills in implementing the students' educational program in my classroom.	80%	11%	8%
6. Skills in communicating and presenting Academic and Social behavior data at meetings relative to placement or program achievement.	23%	66%	11%
II. Assessment and Curriculum Delivery			
7. Skills in interpreting the academic needs of my students based on formal assessment data (e.g., test results).	55%	38%	7%
8. Skills in noting the academic needs assessment data (e.g., classroom performance, worksheets, oral).	44%	49%	7%
9. Skills in adapting the materials in my room to meet the academic needs of my gifted students.	62%	27%	11%
10. Knowledge about persons in my school building who can help me with my childrens' curriculum needs.	35%	54%	11%
11. Knowledge about resources in my school that provide for academic differences for my students.	55%	45%	0%
12. Skills in adapting curriculum resources to meet the needs of my students.	67%	29%	4%
13. Skills in using curriculum resources that are self-checking and self-correcting.	31%	42%	27%
14. Skills in recording the daily academic performance made by my students (e.g., right answers/error patterns).	38%	31%	31%
III. Behavior Management Strategies			
15. Skills in dealing with the behavior differences of the gifted students in my classroom.	67%	31%	2%
16. Knowledge about what the current research says about effective classroom behavior strategies.	33%	51%	16%
17. Skills in identifying the kinds of behavior that are appropriate in the classroom, the school campus.	16%	33%	51%
18. Skills in communicating and reinforcing appropriate social behavior that occur in the classroom and the school campus.	36%	53%	11%
IV. Evaluation Strategies			
19. Skills in designing evaluation instrument geared toward academic programming.	67%	27%	7%
20. Skills in interpreting academic growth based on classroom evaluation instrument and observation.	62%	29%	8%
21. Skills in recording evaluative data pertinent to academic program.	29%	55%	16%

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Table 2 depicts the perceived needs of the teachers upon entry to the training of mainstream teachers teaching gifted students. Teachers were informed that all listed competencies were considered as necessary by researchers in the area of gifted education (Altman, Faherty, Patterson, 1978), yet, they were instructed to rate the competencies in the order of their individual needs as teachers of the gifted. In each of the four categories, the training provided was primarily aimed at the area or areas rated as being 60 percent or higher as most important - Therefore, there were seven competencies given by primary attention by the training facilitator. In category I, competencies 2 and 5 were perceived as most important. In category II, competencies 9 and 12 were perceived as most important. In category III, competency 15 was rated as most important. In category IV, competencies 1 and 2 were rated as most important.

Midway the course, in which seven sessions of three and a half hours each had been provided, participants were asked to rate the same competencies as to their greatest need as being "most important" on that day.

TABLE 3: PERCEIVED NEEDS OF CLASSROOM TEACHERS WITH RESPECT TO GIFTED STUDENTS

N = 45

Perceived Need	Percent Rating of Responses					
	Most Important		Important		Not As Important	
	1st	2nd	1st	2nd	1st	2nd
I. Implementation Practices of the Gifted Program						
1. Knowledge of state guidelines.	54%	32%	37%	10%	8%	58%
2. Knowledge about how to get specialized services to gifted students in my classroom.	67%	16%	33%	41%	0%	43%
3. Knowledge about the identification process in AISD.	42%	41%	42%	6%	16%	53%
4. Knowledge about the students' educational program.	51%	67%	40%	11%	8%	22%
5. Skills in implementing the students' educational program in my classroom.	80%	19%	11%	65%	8%	16%
6. Skills in communicating and presenting Academic and Social behavior data at meetings relative to placement or program achievement.	23%	20%	66%	37%	11%	43%
II. Assessment and Curriculum Delivery						
7. Skills in interpreting the academic needs of my students based on formal assessment data (e.g., test results).	55%	35%	38%	35%	7%	30%
8. Skills in noting the academic needs assessment data (e.g., classroom performance, worksheets, oral).	44%	35%	49%	35%	7%	30%
9. Skills in adapting the materials in my room to meet the academic needs of my gifted students.	62%	45%	27%	40%	11%	15%
10. Knowledge about persons in my school building who can help me with my childrens' curriculum needs.	35%	24%	54%	45%	11%	31%
11. Knowledge about resources in my school that provide for academic differences for my students.	55%	45%	45%	30%	0%	25%
12. Skills in adapting curriculum resources to meet the needs of my students.	67%	47%	29%	27%	4%	26%
13. Skills in using curriculum resources that are self-checking and self-correcting.	31%	25%	42%	45%	27%	30%
14. Skills in recording the daily academic performance made by my students (e.g., right answers/error patterns).	38%	29%	31%	42%	31%	29%
III. Behavior Management Strategies						
15. Skills in dealing with the behavior differences of the gifted students in my classroom.	67%	22%	31%	47%	2%	31%
16. Knowledge about what the current research says about effective classroom behavior strategies.	33%	17%	51%	64%	16%	19%
17. Skills in identifying the kinds of behavior that are appropriate in the classroom, the school campus.	16%	11%	33%	25%	51%	64%
18. Skills in communicating and reinforcing appropriate social behavior that occur in the classroom and the school campus.	36%	25%	53%	31%	11%	44%
IV Evaluation Strategies						
19. Skills in designing evaluation instrument geared toward academic programming.	67%	46%	27%	40%	7%	14%
20. Skills in interpreting academic growth based on classroom evaluation instrument and observation.	62%	47%	29%	36%	8%	17%
21. Skills in recording evaluative data pertinent to academic program.	29%	30%	55%	53%	16%	17%

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Table 3 decpits the initial rating and the mid-term ratings - of the perceived needs of the teachers. In category I, competency four (4) was the only competency that was perceived as "most important" - In categories II, III, and IV, no competencies were rated as most important by 60 percent or more of the teachers. The greatest changes in the teacher's perceived needs as most important in category I was in competencies five (5) and two (2). Due to the teacher's expressed needs at the beginning of the course in relation to planning involving time, teaching knowledge and support services, the ratings at mid-term appear to describe that some of these needs had been met. At this time, their most important perceived need was shown as needing greater knowledge about the students' overall educational program. Training modifications were made to address the perceived needs of the participants (Friedlander, 1978).

At the last session, the fourteenth meeting of the course, teachers were asked to again rate the same competencies as to their perceived needs at the end of the training period.

TABLE 4: PERCEIVED NEEDS OF CLASSROOM TEACHERS WITH RESPECT TO GIFTED STUDENTS

N = 45

Perceived Need	Percent Rating of Responses								
	Most Important			Important			Not As Important		
	1st	2nd	3rd	1st	2nd	3rd	1st	2nd	3rd
I. Implementation Practices of the Gifted Program									
1. Knowledge of state guidelines.	54%	32%	29%	37%	10%	42%	8%	58%	29%
2. Knowledge about how to get specialized services to gifted students in my classroom.	67%	16%	41%	33%	41%	57%	0%	43%	2%
3. Knowledge about the identification process in AISD.	42%	41%	32%	42%	6%	44%	16%	53%	24%
4. Knowledge about the students' educational program.	51%	67%	50%	40%	11%	38%	8%	22%	12%
5. Skills in implementing the students' educational program in my classroom.	80%	19%	13%	11%	65%	56%	8%	16%	31%
6. Skills in communicating and presenting Academic and Social behavior data at meetings relative to placement or program achievement.	23%	20%	13%	66%	37%	56%	11%	43%	31%
II. Assessment and Curriculum Delivery									
7. Skills in interpreting the academic needs of my students based on formal assessment data (e.g., test results).	55%	35%	23%	38%	35%	62%	7%	30%	15%
8. Skills in noting the academic needs assessment data (e.g., classroom performance, worksheets, oral).	44%	35%	41%	49%	35%	41%	7%	30%	18%
9. Skills in adapting the materials in my room to meet the academic needs of my gifted students.	62%	45%	30%	27%	40%	40%	11%	15%	30%
10. Knowledge about persons in my school building who can help me with my childrens' curriculum needs.	35%	24%	26%	54%	45%	64%	11%	31%	10%
11. Knowledge about resources in my school that provide for academic differences for my students.	55%	45%	19%	45%	30%	44%	0%	25%	37%
12. Skills in adapting curriculum resources to meet the needs of my students.	67%	47%	12%	29%	27%	35%	4%	26%	53%
13. Skills in using curriculum resources that are self-checking and self-correcting.	31%	25%	44%	42%	45%	31%	27%	30%	25%
14. Skills in recording the daily academic performance made by my students (e.g., right answers/error patterns).	38%	29%	28%	31%	42%	36%	31%	29%	36%
III. Behavior Management Strategies									
15. Skills in dealing with the behavior differences of the gifted students in my classroom.	67%	22%	63%	31%	47%	15%	2%	31%	22%
16. Knowledge about what the current research says about effective classroom behavior strategies.	33%	17%	28%	51%	64%	50%	16%	19%	22%
17. Skills in identifying the kinds of behavior that are appropriate in the classroom, the school campus.	16%	11%	27%	33%	25%	38%	51%	64%	35%
18. Skills in communicating and reinforcing appropriate social behavior that occur in the classroom and the school campus.	36%	25%	22%	53%	31%	45%	11%	44%	33%
IV. Evaluation Strategies									
19. Skills in designing evaluation instrument geared toward academic programming.	67%	46%	33%	27%	40%	59%	7%	14%	8%
20. Skills in interpreting academic growth based on classroom evaluation instrument and observation.	62%	47%	25%	29%	36%	70%	8%	17%	5%
21. Skills in recording evaluative data pertinent to academic program.	29%	30%	29%	55%	53%	50%	16%	17%	21%

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Table 4 depicts all three ratings - initial, mid-term, and final. Only one competency in the entire group was rated by 60 percent of the teachers to be most important. In category II, competency 15 was rated by 67% of the teachers to be most important. The most noted changes in the decrease of being most important as perceived needs during the last seven training sessions were in: category II, competencies 9, 11, and 12; in category IV, competencies 19 and 20; and in category III, competency 15 resurfaced as a most important perceived need.

In reviewing the three ratings of perceived needs of the teachers as being most important, the competencies which decreased 50% or more from the initial or first rating to the final rating were as follows:

1. In Category I, competency 5
   (Skills in implementing the students' educational program in my classroom).

2. In Category II, competencies 7, 9, 11, and 12
   (7 - Skills in interpreting the academic needs of my students based on formal assessment data).

   (9 - Skills in adapting the materials in my room to meet the academic needs of my gifted students).

   (11 - Knowledge about resources in my school that provide for academic differences for my students).

   (12 - Skills in adopting curriculum resources to meet the needs of my students).

3. In Category IV, competencies 19 and 20
   (19 - Skills in designing evaluation instruments geared toward academic programming).

   (20 - Skills in interpreting academic growth based on classroom evaluation instrument and observation).

In reference to Table I which described the problems the teachers had encountered in teaching the gifted, each of the four problem areas appear to have been addressed to a degree by the end of the training sessions.

In the problem of Planning, the correlation of the teacher's perceived achievement in the competencies 5, 7, 9, 11, 12, 19 and 20 all lend themselves to more efficient and effective planning. In the problem area of Teaching Knowledge, competencies 5, 7, 12 and 20 appear to be most highly correlated with increased mastery in the knowledge of teaching. In the problem area of Teaching Resources, competencies 9, 11 and 12 appear to have directly assisted the teachers. In the problem area of Support Services, none of the competencies (5, 7, 9, 11, 12, 19 and 20) appear to be directly related to increasing the teacher's competency and relieving the perceived problems. Yet, in referring to Table 4, competency 1, (Knowledge of state guidelines), and 3, (Knowledge about the identification process in AISD) depict marked decreases in ratings of being most important. Competency 1 decreased from 54% to 29% and competency 3 decreased from 42% to 32%. Thus, this problem area had evidently been addressed and relieved to a degree during these training sessions (Purves, 1978).

By allowing direct and initial teacher input relative to their individual perceived needs to effectively provide instruction to the gifted student in their regular or mainstream classroom, the relevancy of the training appeared to provide decreases in the problem areas the teachers described (Bush, 1978). At the same time, the training facilitator, university professor, provided

the teachers with research-based, teacher competencies needed to effectively teach the gifted student. As the competency-based training addressed the teacher-expressed problem areas, a "match" of the ingredients of need, research, and practical application supplied the compatible amounts to allow for a very much needed product -- relevant training for teachers (Jackson, 1971).

It is a definite reality that gifted students are primarily provided instruction in the regular classroom. This reality has created an urgent impact for teachers and urgent challenge for teacher trainers! Therefore, training via university coursework must be designed to meet the expressed needs of teachers to assist them in meeting the increasing variations of the educational needs of gifted students served in the regular classroom.

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Guidelines -

Competencies -

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